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SUBJECT: IRAQI VP HASHIMI HAILS CROSS-SECTARIAN MEETINGS;
CAUTIONS CODEL WARNER AGAINST "PREMATURE" DISCUSSION OF
TROOP WITHDRAWAL

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: During an October 2 meeting with CODEL Warner, Iraqi Sunni Vice President Hashimi gave a read-out of the previous evening's cross-sectarian meeting organized by PM Maliki to deal with Iraq's militia problem. For the first time, Hashimi said, Shiite Itilaf interlocutors spoke & frankly and openly⁸ about the need to stop militia violence and acknowledged that they have a role to play in bringing it to an end. Hashimi said he expected that the group would issue a joint statement after its October 2 follow-up meeting, and was optimistic that they would achieve agreement on implementation mechanisms to bring militias under control. Asked about prospects for CF troop withdrawal, Hashimi told Senator Levin that he shared the United States' view on the necessity to look at the matter, however, cautioned that it was premature to discuss specifics. Hashimi said he hoped that, if current cross-sectarian discussions led to a drop in militia violence, a meaningful discussion on troop withdrawal could begin. End summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) CODEL Warner, which comprised Senate Armed Services Committee Members: John Warner (R-Virginia), Carl Levin (D-Michigan), Jeff Sessions (R-Alabama), and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee member Mark Pryor (D-Arkansas), together with the Ambassador, met with VP Tariq Al-Hashimi on October 2.

October 1 Meeting the First Frank Conversation

[¶3.](#) (C) Hashimi characterized the October 1 meeting, which included representatives from each of the Shiite Itilaf bloc parties, as the first frank conversation he ever had with Itilaf counterparts where all sides acknowledged the gravity of the militia problem and showed good will in seeking to resolve it. Hashimi said that it has become clear to all sides that militias are attacking and harming all Iraqis, and that he fully supports PM Maliki's initiative in bringing together all sides. He said that a joint statement condemning militias and seeking a way forward would be issued after the group's follow-on meeting, which would take place the evening of October 2.

[¶4.](#) (C) Hashimi told CODEL Warner that political agreement on the militias problem was not enough - the Iraqi leadership would need to agree on a military strategy to contain militias. Hashimi said that he intended to suggest at the October 2 follow-on meeting that local committees be formed in each neighborhood with Shia and Sunni representatives that would assess each incident of militia violence and refer it

to a central committee in Baghdad for action. He said that the agreement to stop the violence would go far beyond Ramadan, noting that that there should be steering committee meeting every month to review how the work was going.

VP Wary of &Premature8 Talk of Withdrawal

¶15. (C): In response to a question from Senator Levin about when he expected Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to be in the lead and when Coalition Forces could begin troop withdrawal, Hashimi said that he, shared the USG,s aspiration to put ISF in the lead. However, he cautioned, even if the recent meeting on militias led to a viable political agreement, there would be &trial period8 where everyone,s ability to deliver would be tested. He pointed out that he had read reports that about twenty percent of militia violence was out of the control of any Iraqi Shia political leader of entity, but was controlled by Iran and/or purely criminal gang in nature. As such, he said, he did not think it feasible to discuss troop withdrawals at this time. In the event that the militia violence decreased substantially, Hashimi added, conversations about troop withdrawal would surely begin.

Sunnis Committed to Ending Violence

¶16. (C) Hashimi said that recent verbal attacks on the media from Shiite Itilaf bloc members accusing Sunni political leadership of connections to terrorism were counterproductive. (Note: He was referring to media statements from Itilaf figures regarding the MNF-I arrest of a member of Sunni Tawafuq bloc leader Adnan Dulaimi,s personal security team on charges of potential involvement in the planning of terrorist acts. End Note.) Hashimi

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emphasized that as Iraqi Islamic Party President, he rejected the idea of mobilizing a party-based militia. He highlighted recent efforts of Sunni tribe leaders to fight Al-Qaeda in Anbar and said that a historic meeting between the tribal leaders and General Casey was scheduled for October 8.

Unresolved Issues Impede Progress

¶17. (C) Hashimi told CODEL Warner that there were many issues still pending from the time of government formation that PM Maliki has been &slow to resolve8 since he took office. He highlighted in particular a thorough review of de-Baathification, installing a GOI mechanism to ensure balanced and fair representation of all groups employed across ministries, and dealing with MOI reform. Hashimi warned that GOI failure to address these issues head on is damaging his credibility as VP and the Sunni political establishment, leading their Sunni constituencies to disregard them and the political process in general as a vehicle for achieving positive change.

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